

STAFFORD COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

Agenda Consideration

TOPIC: MS2006 SE – Phase III
Archaeological Survey

ITEM NO.: 4B

PREPARED BY: Scott Horan, Executive
Director, Planning &
Construction

MEETING: December 14, 2004
ACTION DATE: January 11, 2004

Andre' A. Nougaret,
Assistant Superintendent
for Support Services

ACTION REQUESTED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT: That the School Board receive for information all background facts relevant to the impending need to conduct a Phase III Archaeological Survey on the new MS2006 SE (Grafton) school construction site.

KEY POINTS:

1. As part of the Stafford County Technical Review Committee (TRC) review process, all new construction is reviewed for local, state and federal environmental and cultural resources compliance. If a construction project adversely impacts existing wetlands a permit must be filed by the applicant (owner) to the Corps of Engineers. As part of the permit review the Corps of Engineers consults with a variety of local, state and federal organizations including the Virginia Department for Historic Resources (VDHR). VDHR determines if there is an impact to cultural resources and, if so, ensures the permit applicant follows applicable laws/regulations with respect to preserving the site and avoiding disturbance. If disturbance of the area cannot be avoided, then VDHR negotiates with the applicant to mitigate the impact through follow-on excavation and recordation of the site and artifacts (Phase II and III Archaeological Surveys).
2. On March 5, 2004 SCPS procured 20.7 acres of land adjacent to Grafton Elementary School to pursue building MS2006 SE. Prior to finalizing the land purchase, SCPS contracted with Stantec Consulting to perform a land feasibility study. The study included an environmental and cultural resources survey (Phase I). Cultural Resources Inc. (CRI) conducted the cultural resource survey. Results of the environmental survey showed two areas of wetlands. Results of the cultural resource survey revealed a civil war encampment (union army) used during the battle of Fredericksburg. CRI identified the site as eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and recommended we preserve the entire site through avoidance. However, understanding SCPS requirements for MS2006 SE CRI recommended being pro-active and initiating a Phase II Archaeological Survey. SCPS hosted a meeting with County, State and Federal organizations involved in the preservation of cultural resources and forged a consensus that initiating a Phase II Archaeological Survey would be required.
3. On July 13, 2004 the School Board approved the Phase II Archaeological Survey.

4. On October 5, 2004 the survey was presented to SCPS. The survey confirmed the site was eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The survey included field-testing, which identified artillery magazine, and rifle pits, camp latrine/drainage ditches, and hut depressions. Numerous artifacts were collected and recorded. The survey also noted that a Phase III (more extensive excavation of the site) might be required by VDHR if the school construction disturbed the former civil war encampment.

5. On November 12, 2004 a meeting was held with VDHR, Corps of Engineers, National Park Service, Stantec, CRI, and SCPS to discuss the next required action. The location of the civil war encampment and wetlands was overlaid onto the site plan produced by the site design civil engineer to assess the impact each had on the other. It was determined that wetlands located on the site would be impacted by school construction and therefore a wetlands permit would need to be filed with the Corps of Engineers. As part of the Corps of Engineers review, VDHR would be consulted.

6. On December 3, 2004 SCPS meet with VDHR for a second time to negotiate final mitigation efforts required by SCPS to meet the requirements of the Corps of Engineers wetlands permit. The following mitigation efforts were agreed to:

- a. Preservation of 2.1 +/- acres in perpetuity (part of the encampment but outside the construction area) to include development of signage to educate visitors
- b. Excavation of less than 5% of the site and recordation of artifacts (Phase III Survey)
- c. Development of a school curriculum that address this specific civil war site
- d. Development of an artifacts display case in MS2006 SE
- e. Development of a web link on the MS2006 SE site that educates about the site
- f. Involvement of selected students to record (video) the excavation work

7. Phase III Archaeological Survey would begin upon School Board approval and involve the excavation of two areas on the site (artillery magazine and hut holes). A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between VDHR, County and SCPS outlining the agreement would also be included as part of the survey work.

8. Specific cost of the Phase III is currently being negotiated and will be provided to the School Board as part of the agenda item at the January 11, 2005 meeting.

SCHOOL BOARD GOAL: #5 - Provide facilities that promote student learning and community support.

#7 - Provide school environments where teachers are safe to teach and students are safe to learn.

FUNDING SOURCE: VPSA – MS2006 SE

AUTHORIZATION REFERENCE: Stafford School Board Policy 4-29